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(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)
Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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WESTERN CIVILIZATION

(*By Gandhiji*)

European civilization is no doubt suited for the Europeans, but it will mean ruin for India, if we endeavour to copy it. This is not to say that we may not adopt and assimilate whatever may be good and capable of assimilation by us, as it does not also mean that even the Europeans will not have to part with whatever evil might have crept into it. The incessant search for material comforts and their multiplication is such an evil, and I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook, if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves. It may be that my reading is wrong, but I know that for India to run after the Golden Fleece is to court certain death. (*Young India*, 30-4-'31)

As to the habit of looking to the West for light, I can give little guidance if the whole of my life has not provided any. Light used to go out from the East. If the Eastern reservoir has become empty, naturally the East will have to borrow from the West. I wonder if light, if it is light and not a miasma, can ever be exhausted. As a boy I learnt that it grew with the giving. Any way I have acted in that belief and have, therefore, traded on the ancestral capital. It has never failed me. This, however, does not mean that I must act like a frog in the well. There is nothing to prevent me from profiting by the light that may come from the West. Only I must take care that I am not overpowered by the glamour of the West. I must not mistake the glamour for true light. (*Harijan*, 13-1-'40)

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FAMILY PLANNING — THE INDIAN WAY

(*By Bharatan Kumarappa*)

With food shortage in various parts of the globe, and especially in countries like ours, thinking men and women are concerned to find means whereby population will not outstrip food supply. One way that suggests itself is of course to limit population increase through birth control. Also it is well known that the poor who constitute the bulk of our population are altogether incapable of feeding or looking after the numerous children they beget, that our infant and maternal mortality is unconscionably high, and ill-nourished mothers are unable to bear the strain of frequent child-birth. Primarily for these reasons it is held that population should be restricted. But the question is how ?

The method which at once suggests itself, and which is one of the matters to be considered by those meeting in conference on Planned Parenthood from November 24th in Bombay, is that of birth control through contraceptives. It is necessary that in making up our minds on this topic certain important issues are not overlooked.

1. Physiologically, the sex secretion is vital to human development. If you tamper with the sex glands you change a person's development. Castrate a male calf, for example, and his physical and mental development is retarded. He is and looks not unlike a cow in appearance. He is meek and mild with none of the ferociousness that characterizes the properly developed bull. If, on the other hand, you overwork the sex glands also, you impede the development of an individual. Thus people given to sex abuse in their youth are often of poor build, neurotic and weak. Masturbation is condemned precisely because it wastes the sex secretion. And yet what will be the result of the use of contraceptives but the reckless waste of this valuable element ? Indeed, from this point of view, contraception appears to be worse even than masturbation, for it involves sex abuse on the part of two instead of one. When there is no fear of conception couples are apt to indulge themselves freely and become a prey to lust, weak-willed, emasculated and lacking in vigour and energy. It is well known that excessive sex indulgence leads even to insanity. Is it right for us

to put in the hands of our people means which are likely to sap thus the very foundations of their physical, mental and moral development?

2. What, it may be asked, is the alternative?

(a) A practical way of preventing too many births is to cut short the child-bearing period of couples by bringing about late marriages. Public opinion should be built up against early marriage, and even legislation may be adopted for the purpose.

(b) Our people had various devices for checking indiscriminate sex indulgence. Couples were separated from time to time when the girl was sent away to her parents' home for long periods. There were rules laid down, whereby the husband was not so much as to touch his wife during certain days. Couples whose children were married were not supposed to mate and beget children themselves. Widows were not permitted to remarry, although this is something we may not approve of today.

(c) With the spread of education and a higher standard of living, we may expect that people will be reluctant to marry early or bear children, as wife and children mean so much more expense in the way of food, clothes, education, medical care and such like. Everything done to promote education and profitable employment leading to a higher standard of living will therefore act as a preventive to indiscriminate breeding.

(d) Above all, in line with our ancient traditions, we need to revive the ideal of self-restraint. Our ancestors had practised great austerities to achieve mastery over the body. They did not however, merely seek to deny the flesh its cravings. Such a procedure would have been negative, leading to frustration and nervous disorders, had they not sublimated their sex craving to something which they regarded as supremely worthwhile, whether it was devotion to the Deity, realization of Self or attainment of salvation. When, on the other hand, one's life lacks purpose and is drab and empty, as is often the rule under modern conditions, one seeks an outlet through sex. What is required to draw the mind away from sex is, therefore, it would seem, some positive life-purpose which will keep the mind entirely absorbed. Some may find it in social service, some in politics, some in pursuit of truth, some in business or an occupation, some in religion, and others in art. Our aim then should be through our educational system to provide our people with such positive ends which are capable of absorbing their time and energy. This will also enable them to practise self-restraint.

These are some methods which might be adopted to control birth without resort to contraceptives.

But, it may be argued that sex indulgence even apart from parenthood is necessary for marital love and happiness. As against this Gandhiji testified, 'I know from my own experience that so long as I looked upon my wife carnally we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection between us always, but we came closer and closer the more we, or rather I, became restrained. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure I could not serve her. The moment I bade goodbye to a life of carnal pleasure our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead.' (*Harijan*, 25-1-'36)

Further, Gandhiji's experience was that self-restraint led to beneficial results. So he said, 'I can clearly recall the fact that this indulgence interfered with my work. It was the consciousness of this limitation that put me on the track of self-restraint, and I have no manner of doubt that the self-restraint is responsible for the comparative freedom from illness that I have enjoyed for long periods and for my output of energy and work, both physical and mental, which eyewitnesses have described as phenomenal.' (*Harijan*, 4-4-'36)

Not only so, Indian literature is full of instances of the remarkable powers acquired by the *brahmachari* or one who practises chastity. Our seers and thinkers, who spent long years reflecting over life and human conduct, had for centuries taught self-restraint as the way to attain *moksha* or the *summum bonum*. The West in comparison is like an infant in this matter. It does not have the advantage of centuries of experience and thought that we have. It is impatient and looks for methods which produce immediate results. Owing to the bane of specialization it seeks to solve each problem separately apart from every other, and fails to see that while, for instance, contraception may control birth, it may have disastrous effects on the virility and character of the nation. It behoves us who are heirs to a great spiritual heritage (i) to weigh and consider the effect of such methods on human beings, and (ii) to study the methods evolved by our ancestors to teach self-control.

Let us not in seeking quick remedies set at naught our own best traditions. Let us remember that according to us marriage is an *ashrama* or a stage in man's spiritual development, a schooling or process of discipline through which he passes on his way to spiritual fruition. The element of personal infatuation which underlies marriage in the West, and which in the last analysis is nothing but primitive sex urge, is carefully excluded thus from our conception of marriage, so much so that two persons who have never set eyes on each other are often united in our country and expected to get on together. Marriage for us is therefore primarily a social affair, a sacrament, where the individual's desires are of little account. It is instituted merely for the purpose of progeny and discipline. On such a hypothesis, married love or sex indulgence can hardly be an end in itself. Indeed, according to the rule of *ashramas* the

husband is even required after a certain period of life as a householder to renounce his wife and children for further spiritual progress. This being so, it is obvious that the view that marriage should mean sex indulgence for its own sake, without reference to parenthood — which is the assumption underlying the use of contraceptives — is entirely contrary to our own tradition in the matter. With remarkable foresight the founders of our civilization, as already pointed out, had harnessed to higher ends this powerful urge within us, which left to itself is capable of leading to dissipation and savagery. They called self-restraint *brahmacharya* or conduct capable of leading one to *Brahma* or the Infinite.

Should we turn away today from this work of centuries and open for our people the flood-gates of sex indulgence through teaching them artificial birth control?

NOTES

'Animal Welfare'

Lovers of animal life — and who should not be one? — will be interested to learn of the following movement for the welfare and protection of animals. Those that desire to join it are requested to send their signatures as directed in the notice reproduced below:

"A *Provisional Charter of Rights* has been prepared and is set forth hereunder. Groups and individuals, whether humanitarian or religious, who approve are invited to append their signatures and to send their observations, suggestions or criticisms to (Mr Ernest Swift, 12, The Down, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England).

Charter of Rights

1. Man's use of the Creatures should not involve any form of cruel exploitation.
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3. All blood sports should be condemned as morally degrading and measures taken to secure their prohibition.
4. Amusements, exhibitions and sports which involve cruelty and suffering to the animals used should be discontinued.
5. The practice of vivisection and the use of animals in the physical laboratories should be abolished as being incompatible with the true application of the Law of Love.
6. All who have the welfare of the Creatures at heart should encourage the adoption of a humane diet and dress and in this way help to reduce the colossal slaughter and incidental suffering of the innocents.
7. The support of all Christians and other religious Communities should be obtained in a world-wide effort to remove a stain on our civilization.

Signatures

We, the undersigned, unitedly declare that man has a definite responsibility for the Welfare and Protection from cruelty of the sub-human kingdom. To fulfil this responsibility it is essential that the terms of this Charter be observed everywhere."

11-11-'52 M. P.

A Timely Publication *

Demographers in the name of science as they know it cry hoarse that we are too many and hence must plan the size of our families through the use of contraceptives. A Conference is being held in Bombay a few days hence to propagate this idea in India and we learn from papers that there is every fear of our Planning Commission blessing this idea. That this is a highly controversial subject in India is well known. And well might the Planning Commission save its precious time for worthier and more agreed purposes like Prohibition, Basic Education etc. and not involve itself in such controversies. Gandhiji strongly fought against this danger of 'moral bankruptcy' and there are innumerable other people who sense in it danger and disease for the human family. The point of difference was well put by Gandhiji through the title of his book on the subject, viz. *Self-restraint vs. Self-indulgence*.† Should we restrain ourselves or should we slip down to irresponsible sex-indulgence made easy and possible through mechanical or chemical devices controlling birth? This is essentially a human and spiritual question, and not merely mechanical or material, as is made out by the scientific school. Do we succumb to our animal weakness and glorify it in the name of science? Or do we as human beings try to assert ourselves, howsoever little it may be, against it and strive in strength? — This is a spiritual problem too. Its consideration, therefore, must be not merely demographic, but must essentially be from the point of view of the whole man — from all sides of his manifold nature — social, moral, and spiritual. It is not only a question, '*how many* we are', but also '*what* we are and wish to be'. The book though named *Too Many of Us?* considers all these aspects of the question in a convincing manner, and is hence a timely publication and may be studied with profit by all interested in the subject.

19-11-'52 M. P.

Massacre of the Innocents

On the one hand the distinguished Chief Minister of Madras State has appealed to the people to buy handloom cloth. On the other hand during the first six months of 1952 our Minister of Commerce in Delhi ordered out from Britain about two crores and thirty-eight lakhs of rupees worth of cotton yarns and manufactures including over twenty-eight lakhs square yards of woven mill goods. We appeal to Rajaji to persuade the Union Officials in New Delhi to desist from such massacre of the innocent Indian weavers.

The sterling balances being already down to an alarmingly low level, must we continue to indulge in the orgy of buying Swiss tapestry, English art silk dressing gowns costing Rs 55 each, English wool overcoating and hosiery, English white twill bush shirts, English hide suit cases at Rs 135 each, moss crepe made in France and what not?

V. G. D.

* *Too Many of Us?* by Albert Navett, Indian Institute of Social Orders, Poona, 1952, p. 188, Rs 3/-.

† Price Rs 2, postage etc. as. 10, Navajivan Karyalaya, Ahmedabad-9.

HARIJAN

Nov. 22 1952

THE BASIC FRONT

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

Shri Rajaji has repeated his demand for the reservation of the manufacture of bordered *dhotis* and coloured *saris* solely to handloom and for the supply to weavers of cheap yarn spun from Indian cotton, now with the added sanction of the unanimous vote of the Madras Legislative Assembly. A resolution on the matter was moved on behalf of his Government and it is noteworthy that the whole House voted in its favour. It surely demonstrates the strength of public opinion about the need of such a step in the planning of our composite textile industry consisting of the Charkha, the handloom and the mill.

Since Rajaji first expressed this demand, there has been going on a keen controversy in the Press and on the platform about it. The mill industry immediately came out to oppose it for obvious reasons of self-interest. Queerly enough, the Union Minister of Industries also did not quite favour it. However, coming as it was from a man of Shri Rajaji's status and eminence, the demand had to be heeded to; and it seems the Union Government would move somewhat and in some manner. It has reacted to the proposal by an announcement to appoint a Handloom Board, a high-powered Textile Inquiry Committee, and to create a Handloom Fund. From the point of view of the precise demand made by Shri Rajaji, this is neither here nor there. As I had said before, there is no need for wasting time and money by having a Committee in this regard, except that the Union Government, for some reason or another, is not quite prepared to do a very obvious thing of giving much needed protection to one of our greatest cottage industries.

The nature of the opposition to the demand might be imagined from a cryptic remark Shri Rajaji made when replying to the debate in the Assembly. He said that,

> "he was happy that all sections of the House, whatever the reasons, supported the resolution. That, he considered, was a great gain for those who had to struggle in this matter. He would confess to the House that it was necessary for him to secure the support of the House as the battle had been very difficult. The Government of India, though they understood and appreciated the position, seemed to find 'some difficulty' in making the change and accepting the principle of protection in this regard....The difficulty was one of taking the step. Such difficulty was natural. In the old days when the mill industry of India had to struggle against foreign mill industry, there was protection. That protection was given by the British Government and had been enjoyed all the time. They should copy that example now in an internal matter."
> (*The Hindu*, 6-11-'52)

To put it in other words, the difficulty is simple and clear; it is to make the beginning, in howsoever small a measure, in the revolutionary task of turning the course of economic and industrial history of the last few centuries in India. It is a big question before the Union Government, viz. how it will fulfil the great historical role it is called upon to play as the first Swaraj Government in our country. I may explain myself.

Whatever might have happened elsewhere or even in our own country, during the last two or three centuries of the modern industrial age, India still has the following two as her basic industries on which depends the largest number of her population: 1. Agriculture, 2. Textiles. The foreign rulers of our land adversely affected both of them, obviously in a manner that was mainly in their own interest. And their interest was, as history abundantly shows, revenue from the *raiyat* and the ruination of our world famous textile industry so that the British textile industry might be built up on its ashes. For the furtherance of this twofold object, railways were constructed in utter disregard of our irrigational needs, and a system of land-tenure was instituted which progressively resulted into neglect of the tiller of the soil, making of him the proverbial hewer of wood and drawer of water for the imperial master and his Indian accomplices. The textile trade was treated with a more direct and drastic policy. It was actually throttled to extinction by a studied policy of tariff and protection in the interest of the British textile trade. The result was our proverbial unemployment and forced idleness. A country which for ages exported its textiles over the whole world came to importing crores worth of them from outside. And we now witness an equally distressing phenomenon that we yearly import crores worth of food grains from outside. The cycle of ruination of our chief basic industries is almost complete, and we are now required to change and break through this vicious circle left to us as a legacy. The problem that Rajaji has raised by his demand must be viewed in this background. And he has actually pointed it out in clear words. As *The Hindu* of 6-11-'52 reports,

> "Pointing out that the East India Company in the olden days and the British Government in the eighteenth century and in the early decades of the nineteenth century carried out a policy by which India became subservient to the industry of Great

Britain, Mr Rajagopalachari said that exactly the same policy was now sought to be pursued by the textile mills in India and their friends. They wanted the handloom weavers to perish. 'We cannot abandon the millions of skilled artisans and leave them to the tender mercies of the mills,' the Chief Minister added."

Shri Rajaji's remark applies to lakhs of spinners also who are also struggling today for their very bread and against the unequal competition from the mill industry. Unhappily enough, the last centuries of imperialist trade and commerce almost killed out the hand-spinner, leaving his counterpart only, viz. the handloom weaver. The latter could survive the blow only because he tacitly agreed to submit to a minor role of living on the mercy of mills for his basic need of yarn which ceased to come to him from his brother spinner. The mills know well the vantage ground they occupy in their unfair struggle against the handloom. The advantage they have may not be envied, if it does not go against the general good. The resolution of the Madras Legislative Assembly says that textile mills need to be controlled in a manner consistent with the requirements of the handloom and, I may also add, those of the Charkha as well. We might say, we are living today under a Control Raj that the British rulers had established specially for their Second World War needs. The time is now ripe for a fundamental change in that set-up. Both on the food front as also in regard to the cloth question, we are keenly thinking of revising our policies. The Planning Commission is also possessed of these questions. Shri Rajaji deserves the sincere congratulations of the dumb millions of our country in bringing to the forefront the fundamental nature of the basic front before us, viz. to provide food and raiment to every citizen by assuring him honourable work giving him security and economic freedom as a necessary basis for his so-called political freedom. I propose to discuss this question further later on.

10-11-'52

By Mahatma Gandhi

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BIRTH CONTROL

(*By Gandhiji*)

There can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control. But the only method handed down from ages past is self-control or *brahmacharya*. It is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. And medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind, if instead of devising artificial means of birth control they will find out the means of self-control. The union is meant not for pleasure but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.

Artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless. And respectability that is being given to the methods must hasten the dissolution of the restraints that public opinion puts upon one. Adoption of artificial methods must result in imbecility and nervous prostration. The remedy will be found to be worse than the disease. It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts. It is good for a person who overeats to have an ache and a fast. It is bad for him to indulge his appetite and then escape the consequences by taking tonics or other medicine. It is still worse for a person to indulge his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws. Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints. All other restraints defeat the very purpose for which they are intended. The reasoning underlying the use of artificial methods is that indulgence is a necessity of life. Nothing can be more fallacious. Let those who are eager to see the births regulated explore the lawful means devised by the ancients, and try to find out how they can be revived. An enormous amount of spade-work lies in front of them. Early marriages are a fruitful source of adding to the population. The present mode of life has also a great deal to do with the evil of unchecked procreation. If those causes are investigated and dealt with, society will be morally elevated. If they are ignored by impatient zealots, and if artificial methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result. A society that has already become enervated through a variety of causes will become still further enervated by the adoption of artificial methods. Those men therefore who are light-heartedly advocating artificial methods cannot do better than study the subject afresh, stay their injurious activity and popularize *brahmacharya* both for the married and the unmarried. That is the only noble and straight method of birth control. (*Young India*, 12-3-'25)

If it is contended that birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population, I dispute the proposition. It has never been proved. In my opinion, by a proper land-system, better agriculture and a supplementary industry, this country is capable of supporting twice as

many people as there are today. (*Young India*, 2-4-'25)

If contraceptives are resorted to, frightful results will follow. Men and women will be living for sex alone. They will become soft-brained, unhinged, in fact mental and moral wrecks.

If you eliminate birth control there would be other methods. As soon as you agree to eliminate certain methods as harmful, you are bound to find others.

(Mrs. Margaret Sanger's Report in *Asia*, November 1936, of Conversation with Gandhiji).

THE REGIONAL LANGUAGE OF U. P.

(*By Girirajkishore*)

Babu Purushottamdas Tandon inaugurating the Daraganj Mandal Hindi Sabha in Allahabad on October 3, 1952, is reported to have said that he deplored the anti-national move to harm the cause of Hindi through a campaign to make Urdu a regional language of U. P. He added that he was not an opponent of Urdu......and wished that people should read Urdu and Persian...... And he made an impassioned plea to create Hindi consciousness among people so that none could dare to disrupt the Indian culture or ignore the national language, Hindi.

The decision of the U. P. Government in not recognizing Urdu along with Hindi as a language of the province, was to say the least, quite undemocratic and against the spirit of the Constitution. It is childish to deny the fact that lakhs of people in U. P., irrespective of religious beliefs, know no other language than Urdu. The decision of the U.P. Government puts many people to great inconvenience, and it is quite fair and reasonable if such people mobilize themselves and put their grievance before the Government. The saner elements in U. P. and elsewhere should use their good offices to get this just demand accepted. It must also be noted that the President of the Union is empowered under Article 347 of the Constitution to direct the U. P. Government to recognize Urdu as a State language. The Article runs, " On a demand being made in that behalf, the President may, if he is satisfied that a substantial proportion of the population of a State desire the use of any language spoken by them to be recognized by that State, direct that such language shall also be officially recognized throughout that State or any part thereof for such purpose as he may specify." When such is the constitutional position how can the move of the people to get Urdu recognized as a language of the province be called anti-national ?

When Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Bengali and other regional languages can do no harm to the cause of the National language, it is beyond comprehension how Urdu which is *de facto* a language of U. P. and a style of Hindi in another script can harm it if it is recognized *de jure* too ? There seems to be nothing but anti-Urdu feeling which has its roots in communal thought that is responsible for this controversy.

There was a time when Hindi was in the process of becoming the vehicle of Indian culture ; but for reasons into which it is not possible to go in here, its broad-based and all-inclusive growth was checked, and it became in the hands of the 'Purists' a closed thing divesting itself of its rich heritage to become a highly Sanskritized language. Urdu committed a similar mistake in favour of a highly Persianized style. Mahatma Gandhi made very great efforts to lift up both and make of them a language of the common man, which both really were originally. But the protagonists of the Purist school of their home province came in the way, and we have two *pradesh* languages in U. P. at present — the Hindi and the Urdu. Consequently the Hindi as it is today in its home province and as separate from Urdu rendered itself a regional language and hence it is not capable of delivering the goods on an all-India basis. And hence in Article 351 of the Constitution the line of growth of all-India Hindi has been clearly chalked out as follows :

> "It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of Hindi language, develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the language of India specified in the eighth schedule, and by drawing wherever necessary or desirable for its vocabulary primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages."

As long as the people of the Hindi-speaking provinces consider the spread of Hindi in the country as their closed preserve, the people of non-Hindi provinces will smell some sort of language imperialism. But if they are left to themselves they will surely make their best efforts — as some are making even now — to teach Hindi to their people and to make their contribution in the growth of the language in the light of the directive in Article 351. The problem therefore is, for all in U. P., to acknowledge Hindi and Urdu both as regional languages of U. P., evolve a happy common simple amalgam of the two styles, and allow all-India Hindi to develop itself freely and fully to become in a true sense the medium of " the composite culture of India ".

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WHAT NEEDS CONTROLS AND HOW

(*By J. C. Kumarappa*)

(A Memorandum submitted to the Planning Commission by J. C. Kumarappa).

Rationing and controls have played havoc and have helped to create black-markets. Money crops enable the middlemen to export raw materials.

The Two Types of Controls

Control of Consumption

Our Government has been blindly following the methods adopted by countries like Great Britain and that indifferently. They export manufactures and import food materials. There all food coming into the country is known and that, when it is divided by the population, gives the ration per head. They place their control at the consumption stage regulating distribution, which is suited to their economy. Thus rationing and control of prices can serve to alleviate the situation in Great Britain.

Control of Production

Ours is an agricultural country that should produce a good deal of the food we need. At best the stock available is but an estimate. In the absence of an intensive production drive, the mere rationing of existing stocks, with an illiterate population, places an undue strain on the distributing mechanism and encourages black-marketing. Our approach should be from the other end. Consumption control will not help us. We have to control production by a proper crop planning. We have to afford facilities for increasing such production as the country needs. This indicates licensing and regulating production, rather than rationing and doling out existing stock of goods. This sphere the Government has not explored to meet the present situation; nor are they even conscious of it. While the character of the problem in Great Britain admits of placing it under the administrative machinery for its solution, the situation in our country, on the other hand, calls for technical experts from the Agricultural Department.

Scarcity in consumer goods has called for regulations of some kind to ensure certain measure of social justice. Rationing is still with us. Black-marketing and profiteering seem to be flourishing and the Government is busy with controls. To an onlooker there seems to be something "wrong in the State of Denmark". What that is many people are not able to tell.

Function of Price Control

The mechanism of price has its main spring in the law of supply and demand. Therefore, any control of commodities and their prices must take the form of regulating the supply and the demand. Rationing attempts to regulate the demand, but there is a complete absence of any attempt to regulate the supply by crop planning and controlling foreign trade.

The present method adopted by the Government to control prices, is like setting the clock going by constantly turning the minute hand. What we want is to set the mechanism in proper order, then the clock ought to move on its own. This artificial regulation of prices has been largely responsible for black-marketing. The prices have to be regulated automatically, not by a fiat of the Government. The Government has been playing King Canute trying to stop the rising tide of black-markets and profiteering; but the method adopted has been a total failure. In fact great many of the dealers in commodities desire to have the present types of controls on a permanent basis, because it provides the opportunity for black-marketing. Corruption in high places has also been interested in perpetuating controls. It is high time that these matters are set right.

Control of Prices

If we wish to avoid black-marketing and control the supply and demand in the natural way, rationing will take care of the demand but the supply side has to be regulated in the natural way, not by merely setting up the prices artificially but by controlling the supply. Government can do this by stocking a fair amount of articles that are sought to be controlled and holding them in reserve to be sold at fixed regulated prices, in case the stockists are in the market attempting to sell their articles at a higher price. Of course, Government will not enter into the market as a seller, until the merchants themselves, by their actions, invite the Government to take drastic steps. The Government stocks will be held in godowns merely as a stand by, watching to see that the merchants do not advance the price unduly. The moment the market prices tend to go up, the Government godown will be opened and the stock dumped on the market to bring down the prices. The Government holdings need not be more than 10 to 15 per cent of the stock required to be able to effectively affect the market.

This is not a novel measure. It had been tried out successfully in the working of the Bihar Central Relief Committee under private agencies, without the aid of the law or other Government powers — basing our appeal purely on persuasion. Again in finance, this is the method used by the central banks to regulate interest rates, which are but market prices for money. For some unknown reason the Government has not followed this well tried path but have taken to the King Canute method of fixing prices arbitrarily and by so doing, driving the commodities underground. It is not too late, even now, for the Governments to change over and gradually decontrol the commodities as the market assumes normal conditions. Immediate steps should be taken to relieve the distress the people are suffering from because of the present methods of control.

In Industries

As regards industries controls are being used indiscriminately and their very purpose is being frustrated.

Where return on capital and profits is the objective of a business — as in centralized industries — price control checks accumulation of wealth and profiteering. On the other hand, in decentralized industries, where the return the artisan gets is a wage, such price control will act as an obstacle on distribution of wealth. The latter is harmful in a poor country like ours.

Where certain articles are produced both by the centralized methods and by the decentralized, as in the case of cloth or oil, price controls may be applied to mill products but not to handmade goods if we follow the fundamental principles of public finance and abstain from restricting the much desired distribution of wealth.

Many Provincial Governments are killing village industries by their indiscriminate use of price controls. Practically, they have brought the *ghani* oil pressing to the brink of ruin by their control of prices of oil seeds, *ghani* oil-cakes, and oils.

'Witch Doctoring'

The following report which appeared in *Glasgow Record* has been reproduced in *The Vaccination Inquirer* of July-August 1952 (p. 68):

'At a meeting held in Edinburgh Dr. Lipetz said, "In medical circles there is not complete unanimity about B. C. G. *Under present regulations it is only close contacts in T. B. cases who are vaccinated.*

"In Scotland, where T. B. is said to be a scourge it would be advisable for B. C. G. to be available in the same way as vaccine for diphtheria."

Professor J. W. Cotton, of the chair of T. B. at Edinburgh University, replied that at the moment the Medical Research Council were investigating the potentialities of B. C. G. and their answer was expected in about two years. He advised waiting until the findings of the Council were published.

"We *should not go into the witch doctoring phase until we have definitely proved the usefulness of B. C. G.*," he maintained.' (Italics mine).

Can underfed, underclothed, underhoused India afford to rush in where Britain fears to tread?

V. G. D.

A MEANINGLESS RESOLUTION

(By Vinoba)

I came across a curious news-item in yesterday's daily paper.* It says that the Peasants' and Workers' Party (a political party in Maharashtra) has expressed opposition to the Bhoodan Yajna Movement and has asked the people to beware of it. What is one to make of this resolution?

Does it mean that those who are donating land should stop doing so? People have till now been occupied with the acquisition of wealth, regardless of the means for it. If, instead of this, the mentality of the people is directed towards the equal distribution of wealth, how would it harm any one? One may well say that the giver should not feel vain over his gift. I agree and say so.

Does it mean that the landless should refuse the gift when it is offered to them? How will this benefit the landless? One may well say that they should not receive them in the spirit of servility. I have been saying from the beginning of my campaign that we are not conferring any favour on the landless, we are merely restoring to them what is theirs by right.

Does it mean that when land-owners holding 100 or 200 acres offer only a petty acre or two, the offer should be refused? If this is what is suggested, I am in agreement with the suggestion, and, I have been acting accordingly. Lately I have started asking for the one-sixth share. If a man who owns ten thousand acres has offered only a hundred, I have openly declined to accept the gift; and there are several examples of this. Moreover the demand for the one-sixth share is made of men of moderate means only. I have stated that in case of the rich the one-sixth share will only be a first instalment to be followed by more.

Does it mean that this movement would hinder or in any way interfere with the passage of a more radical land-reform legislation by the Government? But those who are interested in the passing of legislation are free to proceed with their efforts in that direction, I do not stand in their way. On the other hand, the awakening which the movement is creating on every side is bound to give a fillip to the question of legislation on this subject.

Is it feared that the movement may take off the edge from the resistance against the iniquities of the existing order? I feel on the contrary it will sharpen it. I have been asked why I ask for land even from the poor. I have adduced several reasons for it, one of which is that I want to raise an army of adherents of my idea. Those who are participating in this sacrifice by voluntary acceptance of poverty are, so to say, registering themselves as the soldiers of this non-violent army. Where the Zamindars are evicting tenants from the lands which the latter have been cultivating over years, I have asked them to offer non-violent resistance. This has produced good results in Uttar Pradesh. It has heartened the tenants and the Government has also instructed its officers to give just protection to them. I have only recently come to Bihar. Here too, I am doing the same thing and hope that the result will be as good as elsewhere.

To conclude, the said resolution of the Peasants' and Workers' Party is to all intents and purposes meaningless. I know there are some very sincere workers in that party. I should like to request them that if they have the uplift of the landless at their heart, they should shake off all misgivings and co-operate with me for the success of the Bhoodan Yajna. Even after that if they still have some of their doubts left with them, I invite them to discuss their doubts with me. Either they will have their doubts removed, or they will convince me of what they think right. I am a friend to them and am ever ready to explain as also to understand any view-point.

Tikari (Bihar), 31-10-'52

(From Hindi)

* Vide — *Times of India*, 29-10-'52.

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
WESTERN CIVILIZATION	.. Gandhiji	329
FAMILY PLANNING — THE INDIAN WAY	.. Bharatan Kumarappa	329
THE BASIC FRONT	.. Maganbhai P. Desai	332
BIRTH CONTROL	.. Gandhiji	333
THE REGIONAL LANGUAGE OF U. P.	.. Girirajkishore	334
WHAT NEEDS CONTROLS AND HOW	.. J. C. Kumarappa	335
A MEANINGLESS RESOLUTION	.. Vinoba	336
NOTES:		
'ANIMAL WELFARE'	.. M. P.	331
A TIMELY PUBLICATION	.. M. P.	331
MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS	.. V. G. D.	331
'WITCH DOCTORING'	.. V. G. D.	335

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